



Courtesy photo by MARC THAYER

Conductor Roderick Cox, soloist Kelly Hall-Tompkins, Marc Thayer, executive director of Symphony NH pose for a recent photo.

Music Unites

Symphony NH: Breaking tradition by transforming it

“Without tradition, our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof.” – Tevye, “Fiddler on the Roof”

The theme of “Fiddler on the Roof” is about holding on to tradition – but also the need to break with tradition, to transform it by creating new traditions.

In a visceral sense, virtuoso violinist Kelly Hall-Tompkins, guest soloist performing the Beethoven Violin Concerto in D Major last Saturday night with Symphony NH, who was “the fiddler” for 13 months on Broadway, lived that tension between honoring tradition and breaking it each night. As concert mistress, Hall-Tompkins performed all those famous tunes from the darkness of the orchestra pit while actor Jesse Kovarsky, acted as the “fiddler” on stage.



D. QUINCY WHITNEY

She must have yearned to put her mark on the music as if she could play it on stage. In fact, over the past year since leaving the production, Hall-Tompkins did just that, orchestrating these famous melodies for solo violin and making them her own in a new album released two days ago – The Fiddler Expanding Tradition.

But a decade ago, long before she dreamt of Broadway, Hall-Tompkins bucked tradition by bringing her music to soup kitchens and shelters. Last week, she performed her 93rd “Music Kitchen – Food for the Soul” concert at the Nashua Soup Kitchen.

The issues of visibility and voice – and access – echo through the traditions of the classical music world – and certainly no more dramatically than for Guest Conductor Roderick Cox, hailed by the Minnesota Orchestra as a “trailblazer.” The day before conducting Beethoven with Hall-Tompkins, Cox learned he had been accepted into the Malko Competition For Young Composers in Copenhagen, Denmark, to take place in April.